When I came to Ball State's campus as a freshman two years ago, I was an angry black woman. I was angry for several reasons. I was angry because I realized I was the minority. I was angry because people treated me differently as the minority. I could not find the words to express myself. I did not know what my beliefs were, and I did not know how to find that roar within myself—the roar that has the potential to be a game-changer. Now, however, I have started to unearth the meaning behind the phrase, “Enjoy the struggle.” Enjoying the struggle requires a release from any bitterness, doubt or anger I've kept pent up inside myself. Now I am choosing to question myself and my environment instead of growing angry. I am choosing to go deeper and expand myself beyond the bounds of what I originally thought to be true about the world. I have begun a complete transformation. Part of the transformation involves embracing and celebrating the differences in others. I choose to celebrate these differences through the lens of diversity, and it is my goal to bring more diversity to campus—specifically through the Department of Theatre and Dance.

The steps I have taken towards bringing more diversity into the theatre department have been a struggle, but the results of my hard work have proved to be my greatest victory in my academic career thus far. During the 2013-2014 school year, a new organization, the Ethnic Theatre Alliance sprung up and I joined as the Vice President of the organization. Our goal is to educate members of the Ball State community on diversity using fine art. We want more people of color on stage in non-traditional roles. We want more faculty members of color in the department because actors/artists of color have different experiences with casting and finding work in the professional world. We want to begin breaking stereotypes that have been placed on people of color that are evident in television, on stage and in film.

Through the Ethnic Theatre Alliance, I worked on finding a guest artist of color to visit campus. Bringing in an artist of color is important to me because in the two years I have been here, there have
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Essay

been no guest artists of color who have come to work with students in the department. Using one of my professors, Jonathan Becker, as a mentor I found guest artist, Michael Fosberg, who I believed would benefit the Department of Theatre and Dance and the rest of Ball State's campus. Working in conjunction with the Multicultural Center and the Office of Institutional Diversity, I will be helping to bring Michael Fosberg—an actor, artist and trained diversity specialist—to campus for the fall semester of 2014. Michael Fosberg will participate in the upcoming Diversity Symposium, hold workshops for students on campus, and specifically work with actors in the theatre department.

As I mentioned before, helping to jump start the Ethnic Theatre Alliance and securing Michael Fosberg as a guest artist has been a great victory for me, but I believe there are more victories for me in the future. I want a stronger connection between the theatre department and other organizations on campus and I believe linking diversity and art is a great way to build this connection. During the upcoming 2014-2015 school year I want to collaborate with the Big Four, the Multicultural Center and the Office of Institutional Diversity to create more performance art, bring in more artists of color and have more evenings of storytelling and sharing of cultural differences. I am also a strong believer that diversity expands far beyond ethnicity and race, so I am extremely interested in exploring other aspects of diversity—whether it be blind or seeing, gay or straight, thick or thin—all differences need to be talked about and celebrated.

This is the beginning of my journey helping to bringing diversity to Ball State's theatre department, the city of Muncie and beyond. Through the lens of diversity I want to explore what it means to be an actress and artist as a woman of color. I want to continue to ask questions of myself. I want to question those around me. And when those questions are answered, I will find new ones. I want to continue cultivating the voice within myself so that one day my voice will boom. I agree with
activist Malala Yousafazai when she said, “I raise up my voice—not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard.” I want to help mend the wounds of hate and bigotry by using my voice and my art. I want to grow as an artist, activist and leader.